



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: November 2, 2005

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item X: Consideration of resolution authorizing the acquisition of parcels in Los Angeles County Chapter 8 Agreement Nos. 2466, 2467 and 2468, in the unincorporated Calabasas, and Topanga Canyon areas, City of Malibu, and the Woodland Hills, Tarzana, Sherman Oaks, Beverly Glen, Benedict Canyon, Cahuenga Pass, Beachwood-Hollywood Knolls, and Laurel Canyon areas of the City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the acquisition of parcels in Los Angeles County Chapter 8 Agreement Nos. 2466, 2467 and 2468, in the unincorporated Calabasas, and Topanga Canyon areas, City of Malibu, and the Woodland Hills, Tarzana, Sherman Oaks, Beverly Glen, Benedict Canyon, Cahuenga Pass, Beachwood-Hollywood Knolls, and Laurel Canyon areas of the City of Los Angeles.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) commonly enters into Chapter 8 Agreements with Los Angeles County to acquire tax defaulted properties. This process is an essential component of the agency's efforts to increase the amount of protected open space in southern California. The MRCA has acquired over 1,000 acres through this process.

The County has provided three new agreements to sign. Chapter 8 Agreement Number 2466 contains 25 tax defaulted parcels in the City of Los Angeles. Agreement Number 2467 contains 16 tax defaulted parcels in Calabasas and Topanga Canyon. Agreement number 2468 contains one tax defaulted parcel in the City of Malibu. In order for the County Treasurer and Tax Collector to finalize these agreements, the MRCA must provide a resolution authorizing the acquisition of the parcels. To date the Governing Board has adopted such resolutions and then adopted subsequent resolutions authorizing the use of specific fund sources for all concerned parcels. This is not the optimal pathway. From this point on, staff is moving to determine all the necessary funding sources and other approvals at a

much earlier juncture. Staff would wait until such information was available on some or all of the three subject agreements, except the Treasurer and Tax Collector's office is pushing staff to make timely progress on the agreements. In addition, any delay will guarantee higher acquisition costs. The discussion of each parcel, or set of parcels, below addresses the expected funding source.

Each of the three agreements is discussed separately below. A table below includes each parcel, its size, general location, and current cost to the MRCA. The cost estimate is projected through March 2006. Unfortunately, the cost of the parcels increases substantially every year as penalties and back taxes increase. That rate of increase is approximately 1.5 percent per month. A brief description of each parcel, or cluster of parcels, follows along with an attached aerial photographs with the parcel boundaries.

Chapter 8 Agreement Number 2466

APN	Acreage	Location	Price
2172-017-081	0.11	Woodland Hills	\$17,860
2274-010-003	0.39	Sherman Oaks	\$64,924
2274-020-031	0.03	Sherman Oaks	\$4,193
2274-020-032	0.03	Sherman Oaks	\$4,189
2274-020-033	0.05	Sherman Oaks	\$1,699
2428-026-034	0.06	Cahuenga Pass	\$7,349
2429-026-001	0.01	Cahuenga Pass	\$819
4371-017-018	0.71	Beverly Glen	\$41,846
4371-027-004	0.18	Beverly Glen	\$1,581
4371-027-013	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$4,181
4371-032-025	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$11,833
4379-012-007	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$1,944
4380-016-016	0.26	Beverly Glen	\$3,842
4380-017-050	0.24	Beverly Glen	\$8,935

4380-017-054	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$6,159
4380-017-062	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$2,614
4380-018-017	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$31,153
4380-031-018	0.24	Beverly Glen	\$29,065
4383-007-028	0.04	Benedict Canyon	\$3,428
4383-026-010	0.17	Benedict Canyon	\$61,928
4384-011-004	0.34	Benedict Canyon	\$8,300
4434-001-002	1.30	Tarzana- Dirt Mulholland	\$12,451
5567-028-017	0.11	Laurel Canyon	\$19,508
5580-018-004	0.09	Beachwood Canyon	\$12,110
5585-003-030	0.14	Hollywood Knolls	\$15,353

Woodland Hills

The single parcel (2172-017-081) in Woodland Hills is an open lot near Serrania Park. Further analysis shows that the brushing costs on this parcel make it in practical for the MRCA to own without additional maintenance funding. Unless an adjoining neighbor deposits \$20,000 (or some equivalent arrangement) with the MRCA for a maintenance endowment, in the near future, staff will work to remove this parcel from the agreement. If it were to be acquired it would be with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 2 or private funds.

Sherman Oaks

These three slim (20-foot-wide) parcels (APNs 2274-020-031, 032, and 033) would serve a dual purpose. Currently, there is no protected habitat linkage across Camino de la Cumbre between between Fossil Ridge State Park and the MRCA's Fossil Ridge adjacent property (Oak Forest west). The logical place for that connection to occur, the two McKinnon donation parcels that abut the east side of Camino de la Cumbre, provides no guarantee on the west side of the road. To mitigate this uncertainty, it is logical to maximize any now available connectivity on the west side of the road. Although these three parcels do not directly abut parkland on either end, they provide a future guarantee of such connectivity for a total of less than \$10,000. The second purpose is to ensure that development on the west side

of Camino de la Cumbre will consist of smaller sized estates consistent with the neighborhood and the existing lot size. More precisely, these divisions between the lots preclude lot ties and consolidation more detrimental to habitat connectivity. Currently, and in the foreseeable future, there is no brush clearance associated with any of these three parcels. The MRCA's Chief of Construction who oversees the brush clearance activities has stated that, in the future, it would be unlikely for the Fire Department to be overly concerned about the MRCA not doing clearance on the properties (assuming a new house is built) if the larger owners next door have not done so. The parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area A).

The other parcel (APN 2274-010-003) is an important habitat connection parcel between open space on the west side of Beverly Glen Boulevard and a series of slopes that extend north towards the San Fernando Valley and ultimately wrap back south to connect to MRCA's Fossil Ridge adjacent property (Oak Forest west). A developer who wants to develop a cluster of properties immediately to the north on Knobhill Drive has offered to buy this lot, and provide conservation easements over all or portions of several other lots, in exchange for a grading easement on the subject. Such an agreement shall be in place and consistent with County Chapter 8 restrictions prior to the MRCA authorizing acceptance of said funding to acquire this property. No brushing is required now, and any deal with the adjoining landowner would have to provide iron clad assurances that all future brushing would not be the responsibility of the MRCA.

Cahuenga Pass

The protection of a functional system of habitat linkages between Laurel Canyon Boulevard and the 101 Freeway in the Cahuenga Pass (to Griffith Park) is a high priority. The two subject parcels (APNs 2428-026-034 and 2429-026-001) contribute to this system and to the Mulholland Scenic Parkway viewshed. The connectivity case for APN 2428-026-034 is obvious. It is not on the District No. 1 Engineer's Report but it is worthy of adding as a one time opportunity purchase and because of its nominal cost. APN 2429-026-001 has value because it is near the Mulholland Drive bridge over the 101 Freeway. It is important that this parcel is not used as part of larger lot line adjustments with surrounding parcels. These parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area C) if available, or from private donations. A minor amount of brushing is required on APN 2428-026-034.

Beverly Glen

Small lot subdivisions on both sides of Beverly Glen Boulevard offer numerous tax defaulted parcel opportunities annually. However, with the scarcity and value of land increasing, more and more speculators are attempting to assemble blocks of these parcels for fairly significant sized developments. The opportunity to acquire high quality parcels in this area at low prices and that help consolidate a disparate distribution of existing public land is fading rapidly. This agreement includes eleven quality parcels on both sides of Beverly Glen Boulevard. The parcels provide core habitat values and contribute to habitat connectivity. None of the parcels require, or should ever require, brushing. Few if any of the 11 parcels are in the District No. 1 Engineer's Report. However they all meet the objectives of the report, and as is shown on the attached figures, they provide equivalent or greater value than many of those parcels in the report. It is worth adding all of the such parcels to the report because of their value as one time opportunity purchases at nominal cost. Such action would be taken at a subsequent Governing Board meeting. These parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area B).

Benedict Canyon

APNs 4383-007-028 and 4384-011-004 are located on the east slope of Benedict Canyon. Both properties contain high resource value and should not be lost from the public trust. Neither appears to require any brushing. APN 4383-026-010 is on the ridgeline between Beverly Glen and Benedict Canyons also located between an existing MRCA parcel and a large block of City-owned parkland. The parcel would require some brushing, but by being acquired would also prevent even more brushing on adjacent MRCA parkland then if it were to be developed. The ridgeline is an important wildlife corridor and an area worthy of strong protection efforts. None of the three parcels are in the District No. 1 Engineer's Report. However they all meet the objectives of the report, and as is shown on the attached figures, they provide equivalent or greater value than many of those parcels in the report. It is worth adding all of the such parcels to the report because of their value as one time opportunity purchases at nominal cost. Such action would be taken at a subsequent Governing Board meeting. These parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area B).

Tarzana

APN 4434-001-002 is located on the dirt portion of Mulholland Drive in between Mulholland Gateway Park and Topanga State Park. It would be a difficult parcel to develop. Nonetheless Assessment District funds are available to acquire the property just this once. For \$13,000 this inholding should be acquired to preclude

any future problems in one of the key public use areas of the Big Wild. As in the last paragraph, it will need future Governing Board action to be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 2 (Area F).

Laurel Canyon

APN 5567-028-017 provides important Laurel Canyon Boulevard viewshed across from the historic Canyon Country Store. Further analysis shows that the brushing costs on this parcel make it in practical for the MRCA to own without additional maintenance funding. Unless an adjoining neighbor deposits \$20,000 (or some equivalent arrangement) with the MRCA for a maintenance endowment, in the near future, staff will work to remove this parcel from the agreement. If it were to be acquired it would be with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area D). It is worth pursuing private agreements because speculators are attempting to develop the paper streets and small lots in this area. It too would need to be added to the Engineer's Report or be acquired with private funding.

Beachwood-Hollywood Knolls

APN 5580-018-004 is located in the Beachwood Canyon area one parcel away from Griffith Park. It is an exemplary parcel that, along with another MRCA Chapter 8 parcel that is further along in the process, will be a contiguous open space peninsula extending from Griffith Park. APN 5585-003-030 is roughly located in the Hollywood Knolls area. The parcel would provide important ridgeline protection and is part of a habitat linkage extending back west to Lake Hollywood. Neither parcel requires brushing. Both parcels would be funded by Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area E). Both parcels are on the Engineer's Report.

Agreement Number 2467

APN	Acreage	Location	Price
4440-013-013	0.27	Topanga Creek	\$18,472
4455-007-003	0.32	Calabasas	\$2,288
4455-022-010	0.45	Calabasas	\$2,162
4455-031-004	0.09	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$3,319

4455-032-008	0.11	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision	\$1,772
4455-032-009	0.04	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,772
4455-032-010	0.07	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,740
4455-032-011	0.07	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,741
4455-032-012	0.08	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,747
4455-032-013	0.08	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,753
4455-032-014	0.09	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,753
4455-032-015	0.09	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,732
4455-032-016	0.07	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,745
4455-032-017	0.07	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,742
4455-032-018	0.06	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,739
4455-032-020	0.08	Calabasas- Lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision Calabasas	\$1,739

Topanga Canyon

APN 4440-013-013 is located in Topanga Creek. Acquisition would protect a piece of one of the premier streams in the range and preclude bridging of the property to reach parcels to the west. The funding source is In-Lieu-Fee Mitigation fees required to be spent in Topanga Canyon.

Calabasas

The lower Stokes Canyon small lot subdivision should be acquired because it is in an ecologically sensitive area and because the lots present prime fodder for lot line adjustments that would have a detrimental effect on existing parklands. They also provide a buffer for Las Virgenes View Park. The 13 proposed lots would be acquired with funding from a private donation. No fuel modification is required.

APN 4455-007-003 is located a short distance north of the Fritz and Alma Meier Natural Area (Zuniga Pond) in upper Old Topanga Canyon. The area is of great visual and ecological sensitivity. APN 4455-022-010 is an inholding on the Calabasas Peak Motorway between Red Rock Canyon Park and the lower portion of the Cold Creek Preserve (MRT). The parcel probably could not be developed with habitable structures but could be acquired by a private party and be used for activities incompatible the surrounding parkland and natural resources. Both parcels are in the highest priority category on the National Park Service's Land Protection Plan. The funding source for both is undetermined.

Agreement Number 2468

APN	Acreage	Location	Price
4473-006-028	2.10	Malibu- Encinal Canyon, adjacent to Charmlee Park	\$88,331

Malibu

APN 4473-006-028 abuts Charmlee Park to the west and provides a valuable wildlife corridor to the east abutting Encinal Canyon Road. The open space dedication from the long-ago-approved Banyon project is located on the other side of Encinal Canyon Road. Charmlee Park currently remains isolated from any other parkland, and it is valuable to maintain a contiguous band of east-west oriented habitat across the south-facing slope of the range. The property would be acquired by a combination of In-Lieu-Fee Mitigation Funds and the MRCA's Coastal Impact Mitigation Fund.